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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Durban, 31 August - 7 September 2001
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

CONFERENCE THEMES

NGO contributions

Contribution* submitted by Oromia Support Group

The secretariat has received the following written statement, which is transmitted to the World Conference.

* This contribution is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

GE.*200-0567*

ENG

The Oromia Support Group wishes to bring the genocide of Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia to the attention of the World Conference Against Racism. Genocide in Ethiopia is being deliberately perpetrated by the country's government with the aid of its security forces.

In 1997, the government party publication called for the elimination of 'narrow nationalist' tendencies in Oromia Regional State, home to most of the country's 25-30 million Oromo. Detention without trial, the routine use of torture and rape of detainees, disappearance and extra-judicial killing of political opponents in all regions of Ethiopia have been widely reported since the current regime came to power in 1991.

Farmers, tradesmen, educated professional people and successful businessmen and women are being detained, tortured, raped and killed because they are suspected of supporting the Oromo nationalist movement. Oromo civic organisations, concerned with relief, development and human rights, have been closed down and members detained. Members of Oromo self-help and cultural organisations have been detained and tortured. Oromo language teachers have been killed, detained and tortured. Oromo musicians, writers and dramatists have been detained, tortured and driven into exile.

Civil servants, including health professionals and teachers, are dismissed unless they support the government umbrella party. Official and civic national institutions are dominated by the narrow ruling clique. The agricultural and manufacturing industries, indeed all significant commercial enterprises, belong to the governing clique and their associates.

The government security apparatus exerts control over the judiciary and the press. For eight years, Ethiopia has imprisoned more journalists than any other country in Africa.

Peasants and townspeople report a more oppressive security surveillance system than they experienced under previous regimes. Movement of people and goods from village to village is closely monitored. The security network enables suspected political opponents to be tracked across the breadth of the country.

In the year 2000, famine was reported from areas where it was previously unknown. Development has only occurred in Tigray Region, the home of the ruling group. Medicines to combat outbreaks of malaria and cholera have been deliberately withheld from other areas where government opposition is strong. Food aid, as with seeds and fertilisers, was held back in year 2000 from families who were suspected of supporting political opposition movements or who refused to hand over their young men for the war with Eritrea.

Most of those who died in the war, 123,000 from Ethiopia, were Oromo forced conscripts, used as minesweepers in human wave trench warfare.

In early 2000, government officials torched one sixth of Oromia Region's forests, to flush out armed opposition groups. Thousands of farms were ruined in order to reduce the groups' popular support base.

At least 7 students died during demonstrations which followed the fires. In April of this year at least 41 demonstrators were killed by security forces in Addis Ababa. Unknown numbers died elsewhere.

Oromo refugees in Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya and South Africa have been harassed, beaten and killed by Ethiopian government agents. Over 1000 refugees have been sent back to Ethiopia, especially from Djibouti.

The government of Ethiopia has directly and indirectly fostered conflict and bloodshed between Oromo, Amhara, Isaa, Degodia, Gedeo, Gabre and Sidama peoples. Ethiopian security forces have killed Oromo residents in Kenya on frequent cross border raids. They have maintained a military presence in Somalia and are supporting the opposition to the new UN-supported transitional administration.

The Oromia Support Group is grateful for the opportunity to bring the genocide of Oromo and other peoples of Ethiopia to the attention of the World Conference Against Racism. We urge the conference to declare commitment to identifying and building strategies whereby the international community can reduce the capacity for regimes, such as that in Ethiopia, for committing genocide and enable those responsible for genocide to be brought to justice.

We urge the conference to consider means by which foreign aid and assistance from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund is made dependent on improvement in human rights practices in recipient countries. Presently, the short term financial and strategic interests of donor countries outweigh their stated commitment to this policy.

19 June 2001.